

PLANT CONSERVATION:
A BIOGEOGRAPHIC PERSPECTIVE

FOREWORD

LESLIE J. MEHRHOFF

Symposium Committee Chairman

“My plea is for wholehearted protection of that helpless but tremendously interesting group which may be called the fugitive aristocrats, the completely isolated and usually entirely overlooked small colonies, doing no one any harm, but of utmost importance to the student of life and its history through the last 100,000,000 years.”

M. L. Fernald (1939)

Fernald's “fugitive aristocrats” are the rare species, those of biogeographic significance, with which this symposium issue of *Rhodora* is concerned. Conservation of our native flora has always been a concern of the New England Botanical Club. Merritt Lyndon Fernald was, along with many of the first members of the Club, actively involved with the preservation of rare native plant species.

In keeping with this tradition of concern, the Council of the New England Botanical Club approved, in late 1986, a second symposium focusing on plant conservation. The first, entitled Rare and Endangered Plant Species in New England, was held almost a decade earlier. The inspiration for this symposium came after I attended the National Forum on Biodiversity held in Washington, DC, in September, 1986. I mentioned the idea of a second New England Botanical Club symposium to then Club President Rolla M. Tryon, and to him goes credit for the inclusion of biogeography as the central theme around which emphasis on plant conservation could revolve.

With the Council's blessing a committee consisting of then Club Vice-President Garrett E. Crow and Council members Julie A. Hambrook, W. Donald Hudson, Jr., and Bruce E. Sorrie was selected to help organize the 1988 New England Botanical Club's symposium entitled, “Plant Conservation: A Biogeographic Perspective.”

We enthusiastically undertook the charge and began planning early in 1987. There was much more to do than we anticipated and it was good that we had the positive experience of the 1979 NEBC Symposium on which to rely. The idea was to have the

morning session give an historic perspective, move through the fossil record of the northeastern flora, and then discuss current plant distribution. Speakers were chosen whose research would address these goals.

The Council allowed the Distinguished Speaker meeting to be changed from its usual April date to coincide with our May symposium. This change, in effect, gave us an additional keynote speaker. Dr. Hugh H. Iltis of the University of Wisconsin did a splendid job of setting both the mood for the following day's symposium and for raising many questions on plant conservation and current theories with which he disagrees on the extensive frigidity of the South during the Pleistocene. Saturday morning's keynote address by Dr. Robert F. Thorne of Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden gave those in attendance a phylogenetic perspective to biogeographic concerns.

Morning speakers laid a regional groundwork by presenting paleobotanic data and current floristic information. In the afternoon, representatives of each of the New England states were given opportunity to update plant conservation efforts in their respective states since the last symposium. Specific research on taxa of biogeographic interest concluded the afternoon session. Past President Rolla Tryon of Harvard University eloquently summarized the presentations and charged us with a continued need for investigations and for preservation of those biogeographically interesting species to which Fernald referred as the "fugitive aristocrats."

Four papers presented at the symposium are not presented here. Because of the number of slides (two simultaneous projectors—manually operated!), the presentation of Hugh Iltis does not lend itself well to this medium. Arthur Cronquist's work is well known and he felt it adequately covered in his many works on this subject. Cathy Paris's data have recently been published elsewhere (*Systematic Botany* 12: 240–255, 1988) and she did not want to duplicate this paper. Susan Gawler's full remarks will appear elsewhere as part of her thesis. Abstracts for the last three items have been included.

The Council of the New England Botanical Club generously chose to underwrite the cost of this symposium in the face of shrinking financial support. Additional support came from the Chewonki Foundation, Wiscasset, Maine, The Connecticut Geological and Natural History Survey, Connecticut Department of

Environmental Protection, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Josephine W. Ewing did the announcement design and layout. Megan Rollins and Yolanda Aspland helped with the typing. The map of New England was used with the permission of C. Barre Hellquist. Nancy Eyster-Smith videotaped the entire symposium. Copies of these tapes may be borrowed from the NEBC library. David S. Barrington took able charge of refreshments for the entire symposium.

On behalf of the Symposium committee, I would like to thank all those who helped make the 1988 New England Botanical Club symposium on Plant Conservation: A Biogeographic Perspective a resounding success. To those of us in the plant conservation field our path should be more clearly illuminated by the many insightful presentations and beneficial discussions. Fernald (1939) also gave us direction in his article entitled, "The problem of conserving rare native plants," when he said, "True conservation leaves nature, mother of us all, uninjured and the true conservationist is a lover and defender of uninjured nature."

LITERATURE CITED

- FERNALD, M. L. 1939. The problem of conserving rare native plants. The Smithsonian Institution Annual Report for 1939 (Publication 3555): 375-391 and 7 plates.

CONNECTICUT GEOLOGICAL AND
NATURAL HISTORY SURVEY
BOX U-42
THE UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT
STORRS, CT 06268